/15 cont./ 164 842

A number of Marquesans, both male and female, are sterile. In collecting female reproductive life histories, my wife found that sterility in the female, at least, could be often traced to severe cases of venereal disease in adolescence or early adulthood. Similar causes apparently lie behind most of the sterility in males also. The high frequency of venereal disease in the past has taken its toll. It was not until after World War II actually that some realistic control was exercised on social diseases in French Polynesia. Because of the frequency of sterility there are many families consisting of a nuclear couple with only adopted children. 597

In the early 1900's adoption apparently took place at an early age. One of my workmen had never been nursed by his mother, being carried to his adoptive mother for this service at the age of one day. Other individuals recounted similar histories. During the past three decades, however, a trend toward later adoption has begun and many children now are 6 or 7 years old before they go to their foster homes. This may be a result of increased attention to the qualifications of the prospective adoptees. [178]

/17/

Infancy and Childhood

Marquesan infants are cared for largely by their parents and grandparents until they can walk, usually between 9 months and 1 year. At this time they become the responsibility of some of the older siblings. These are generally quite solicitous of their younger siblings, exerting great efforts to carry them when they are tired, and otherwise cater to them. Children carry infants on their backs, with the infant's legs under the arms of the carrier while its arms are used to hold on to its neck or shoulders. In other instances, infants are carried astride the hip. Both practices were observed to result in slight lordosis of the spine for the carrier in instances where infants required long periods of carrying. 854 [164]

Within weeks after birth, many female infants are begun on a cycle of medication which will prepare them for their 856 757

/17 cont./ 856 757
role in adolescent and adult sex life. The medications administered are astringents which are also believed to possess cleansing qualities. They are intended, according to informants, to shrink the mucus membrane lining of the vaginal canal and generally aid in increasing muscle tone of the coccygeo-gluteal muscles. Furthermore, they are believed to inhibit the production of lubricatory fluids (vai to'e) in the vaginal canal and to suppress vaginal malodorousness. Administered after birth, they also cleanse the vagina of the female infant of superfluous dried mucus and effluviae after birth. The results attributed to these medications -- decrease in size of vaginal canal, increased muscle tone and inhibition [832]
of mucus production, and /18/ suppression of malodorousness -- are of major importance as qualifications for a sexual partner. These qualities are most frequently mentioned when males discuss the relative sexual merits of women. The Marquesans 186
believe that women from Tahiti and white women in general 757
are possessed of rather large genitalia and endowed with a 856
superfluity of vaginal secretions which Marquesans regard as 826
contributing to malodorousness. The use of the astringents enumerated below supposedly raises the Marquesan women far above the level of either Tahitians or Whites in terms of their physical attributes for the sex act.

The astringents used are several in number; the plant 757
sources of many occur only in isolated areas and hence are 856
limited in their distribution.

tuei'au (Antidesma sp. ?). The leaves are pounded and mixed with a small amount of water. This mixture is then strained through cloth and 1 or 2 drops placed daily in the vagina after the child has been bathed. This can be begun as soon as the child starts to crawl, but not before. This particular medication is very common in the valley of Hatiheu on the north coast of Nuku Hiva. The only known stand of the tueiau is in the valley of Ha'atuatua, near Natiheu on the crest of ridge forming the

/18 cont./

northeastern side of the valley. Despite its scarcity it is most popular of all the preparations. 757 856

/19/

ko ku'u (Staphylea sp. ?). The leaves of the plant are prepared and administered in the same manner as described above. Can be administered at three weeks of age.

ko'i'e The nut of a coconut (C. nucifera) fallen at a very young stage called koie is used for this medication. The nut is crushed on a stone and squeezed for juice, which is administered three times daily in one or two drops from the time the infant crawls until it reaches an age of a year.

moho ki'o (Achyrathes aspera?). A branch is grated against an abrasive stone and the scrapings squeezed in a cloth after mixing with a small amount of water. The juice can be administered one week after birth.

vai ma This medication consists of water poured from fermented breadfruit paste when it has been removed from storage, pounded with a stone pestle to remove lumps and moistened. The excess water, mixed with urine, can be used as a vaginal astringent.

ki'i kehika (Szygium jambos ?). The bark of the kehika tree (the well-known pomme rouge of Eastern Polynesia), is grated, mixed with water and squeezed through a cloth in the same fashion as the preceding medications.

ki'i 'ama The bark of the candlenut tree (Aleurites trilobita) can be used in the same fashion as the above medication.

/20/

pota ko The juice of the fruits of the mi'o tree (Thespesnia populnea) are crushed for their juice which is administered in the same fashion as noted above.

/20 cont./

pa'u An unidentified tree of this name, believed by informants to grow only in the western side of the central plateau of Nuku Hiva, provides bark which is used as an astringent in the same fashion as that of the kehika tree. 757 856

Some of these medications may be taken in a sequence as follows: moho ki'o, koku'u, ko'i'e, and tuei'au. Where it is impossible to obtain all of the medicinal source plants, such sequential dosage would not be possible, however, and one or two would be selected for use out of the possible alternatives. The medication, once begun, is continued up to the age of menstruation or a little before. If the girl was not treated in infancy, the treatment may be started at any time up to the age of ten years. Adults have been known to use the medication but in the two cases reported experienced rather dangerous side effects, such as extreme swelling of the mucus lining of the vagina, make such adult usage infrequent. The use of vaginal astringents is by no means a tottering survival. Most young couples use one or more of the astringents on their female children. Marquesans residing in Tahiti have requested that tu'ei'au, the most popular of the astringents, be prepared and sent to them. 757 832 [856]

In addition to the effects of the vaginal astringents, a mark of beauty or more appropriately physical acceptability in women is a flat symphysis pubis. To this end, the mons veneris is massaged during infancy and /21/ girlhood. Formerly this massage was accompanied by stretching of the labiae to elongate them. This was done by the mother during the daily bath. The child was seized by the ankles, its legs held apart while the mother manipulated the labiae with her lips. This practice is rare at present, however. 856 832 [178]

For male infants, no such early preparation occurs. The foreskin is pulled back and cleaned at bathing, however, as genital cleanliness is extremely important for the Marquesans. Therefore, care is taken that the foreskin will be flexible when the child grows older, so that cleanliness may be maintained. 855 515

Marquesan children have ample opportunity to observe much of adult sexual behavior. In the typical Marquesan house, 864 513

/25 cont./ 864 603 [856]
of the girls. It is often the grandmother who administers the vaginal astringent to a young girl, further instructing her in techniques of intercourse and more general matters of sexual behavior.

One of the major themes in Marquesan society is that of 515 [183]
bodily cleanliness. Bathing is quite frequent as sensitivity to body odor and dirt is extreme. Beside bathing, a large num- 302
ber of cosmetics are used to suppress any odor that might arise. Foremost is the native pani, or coconut oil, which is scented with a variety of flowers and oil of sandal wood. Flowers them- [824]
selves are also used, most important being /26/ the tia'e (Gardenia tahitiensis). Frangipani (tipanie'e) are the flower of the dead in the Marquesas, and therefore are never used for adornment. Besides these, there are store-bought perfume and hair pomade, the most popular of which is Yardley's solidified Brilliantine, which is used with abandon in such [439]
quantities that only the harshest soaps will remove it from the hair.

Genital cleanliness is extremely important for 515
Marquesans. By the time of puberty it is well impressed on both boys and girls alike. Very scrupulus attention is paid to cleaning beneath the foreskins (ki'i) of males. As the extensive sexual activity of the boys prior to this time has rendered the foreskin flexible, this aspect of cleanliness usually presents no problem. An expression of the attitude toward genital cleanliness is found in the insult: pi'au'ota -- [578]
your stinking foreskin filth), which is an extremely serious affront when uttered in anger.

For girls, constant bathing and the application of [856]
vaginal astringents (which terminates at this time), are emphasized.

The male's passage of puberty is marked by circum- 881
cision (tehe) which usually occurs between the ages of 12 and 14. It is not looked upon primarily as a necessity for personal hygiene, as that is possible to maintain without surgical aid, as noted above. No instances of infection necessitating circumcision were ever recorded. Rather, it is thought of as a milestone in male developing, with a secondary hygenic

/32 cont./ 826 832 757

The sequence of vaginal astringents is terminated at puberty, but a new type of medication is begun in some cases, to alter the color of the mucus membranes and the labiae. It [856] is believed to be shameful for the labiae or mucus lining of the vulva to be excessively ruddy in color, hence a preparation of chopped young coconut meat is applied over the vulva to [824] alter the color of the parts in question. A supposed secondary effect of this medication is to render the pubic hair (hu'u hu'u) more pliable and soft, as coarse pubic hair is considered to be somewhat unbecoming.

/33/ Girls at puberty continue to receive sexual instruc- 864 tions from their grandmothers or members of the grandmother's [602] generation, but much is also learned from more sexually ad- [603] vanced friends. At this age, Marquesan girls are often seen [883] together, talking secretively for long periods of time. The [521] talks almost invariably involve sexual matters. For this reason, government school teachers state that it is wiser to release [875] girls from school at this point, as their interests often attract [871] and produce "adverse" effects on younger girls in the lower grades of school.

At puberty, female homosexuality occurs. One context 864 in which some homosexual play takes place is during instruc- 838 tion of relatively sexually inexperienced girls by others who are more experienced. In such instruction, both girls remove their clothing and assume a position of copulation. The instructor supposedly demonstrates the positions of intercourse and the pelvic movements, acting first as the "girl" and then the "boy" of the couple.

Although very much at ease with each other in states of 291 undress, girls at puberty become very self-conscious about ap- 883 pearing in mixed company in any type of attire that might be termed daring. In intercourse they seldom remove all of their [833] clothing, usually merely pulling up their skirt, even if there is no probability of being surprised en flagrante. Swimming is [526] indulged in fully dressed, if there is any possibility of being observed, while bathing nude in secluded pools is quite com- [515] mon and semi-nudity around the house is the rule.

B

/90 cont./

These data, when taken with the modern evidence for nursing, late weaning and the complex of ethnomedical remedies surrounding nursing, indicate that modern Marquesan nursing is an aboriginal survival, rather than a recent European introduction, as one would have to conclude from Linton's statements.

The extensive rites surrounding the birth of the first male heir in the past are no longer seen, nor is adoption surrounded by the ceremonialism which distinguished it in the past.

Infancy and Childhood

There are no references, either in the historical documents or in ethnographic reports, to the use of the vaginal astringents so common /91/ on Nuku Hiva at present. There are, however, several references in an unpublished Ms on the native flora by Fr. Simeon Delmas, in the library of the Taiohae mission, that indicate a considerable complex of general astringents, including some of those mentioned above in the ethnomedical repertoire of the Marquesans. Several of the astringents could be used percutaneously; the use of others is not identified, but no mention is made in the missionary's notes of any internal use. Nevertheless, the degree of elaboration of this trait complex and the fact that all of the astringents are native plants (many of which are becoming extinct), coupled with the commonness of the practice and the secrecy that surrounds it, lead to the conclusion that it is in truth aboriginal. It is, of course, inextricably connected with the Marquesan emphasis on vaginal qualities as being the prime criteria for judging the sexual value of a woman.

This focus of attention on the genitalia as being of prime importance in a woman's sexual role runs counter to Linton's statements concerning the emphasis on breast development which he believed he saw manifested by the Marquesans (1938, p. 195). It is granted that in assessing general over-all female beauty, importance is attached to a

/93 cont./

observances (Handy, ibid) reported in the ethnographic sources are no longer observed, not even in part. Elder informants, speaking of the past, stated that boys were often assigned to women who would supervise the healing of the incision and indulge in a ritual intercourse upon the removal of the scabs. There is no ethnographic or historic data to substantiate or contradict these statements; however, due to the fact that they were obtained from a usually reliable informant, I deem them to be acceptable, at least tentatively.

Likewise, no comparative data exists for the practice of preserving the bamboo slivers used for stretching the foreskin in the circumcision operation as a charm against impotence, although Handy reports that the slivers were preserved without stating a reason for the preservation. It was only possible to obtain information on this practice in one valley; therefore, the behavior may actually be a local development. It is doubtful if very profound regional differences in such matters can exist in an island population of about 980 people in which a reasonable amount of traffic between valleys takes place.

There is little evidence concerning the age at which male children began to have heterosexual experiences in the aboriginal period. Linton (p. 168) states that both sexes began heterosexual intercourse before /94/ puberty. As will be noted later, this was apparently true for the females, but it may not have been so for males. The stigma attached to lack of circumcision is strong today, and as Handy indicates (p. 95), it was quite strong in the past if not stronger. It is therefore doubtful if boys would be able to enter into heterosexual intercourse before circumcision. It appears, then, that circumcision may have been the gateway to heterosexual relations in the past as it is now, and the disparate ages at which the sexes begin such activity may not be a result of culture contact, but a reflection of the situation.

The vaginal cosmetics used by adolescent girls again bear witness to the heavy emphasis placed on genital qualities in evaluating the sexual potential of a woman. The use of cosmetics can be considered as part of the complex of practices beginning in early infancy, designed to

/94 cont./
ultimately produce a sexually pleasing adolescent girl. The use of cosmetics also appears to be a surviving remnant of an aboriginal girl's ceremony of which relatively little is known today. This lacuna in Marquesan ethnography is largely due to missionary efforts which were concentrated on stamping out all of the more outstanding and orgiastic ceremonies in the Marquesan native culture. Some information was obtained on ceremonies which were related in some way to puberty from informants on Nuku Hiva, in Hatiheū and Taipivai, two valleys which were formerly united in the historic period, at least, as a single tribe -- the Taipi.

/95/ According to informants, adolescent girls were kept at home and subjected to special treatment with the vaginal cosmetics described above, as well as a preparation for lightening skin color, made from the vine papa. Some tattooing may have been performed on girls of higher rank at this time. When the appropriate time arrived, the girls would be taken to the subtribal ceremonial center (tohua or koika) where they participated in ceremonies in which they exhibited themselves, their tattoo if any and submitted to a genital inspection. For the genital inspection they stood upon flat-topped boulders that were ranged along the sides of the rectangular ceremonial plazas. These boulders were called ke'a vehine po'otu or ke'a vehine haka (beautiful girl stone or dancing girl stone, respectively). These boulders are to be found on nearly every ceremonial plaza on Nuku Hiva. Although it is certain that they served other purposes beside genital inspection alone, this purpose seems to have loomed sufficiently large, hence the name attached.

In the genital inspection, if the labiae and mucus membrane lining of the vulva were pale and the pubic hair pliant and short, the girl was acceptable by Marquesan aesthetic standards. If, however, the labiae and membranes were of a ruddy color, then the girl was subjected to considerable derision, being insulted with the appellation of to'e, pa'a, ke hika -- "clitoris (like a) ripe anona squamosa."